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A Campaign document for 1864.
Extract from a Speech by
Alexander H. Stephens, 1861.



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A CAMPAIGN TRACT FOR 1864.

Extract from a Speech by ALEXANDER H. STEPHENS, Vice-President of the Confederate States, delivered in the Secession Convention of Georgia, January, 1861.

THIS step, [the secession of Georgia,] once taken, can never be recalled; and all the baleful and withering consequences that must follow, (as you will see,) will rest on the Convention for all coming time. When we and our posterity shall see our lovely South desolated by the demon of War, which this act of yours will inevitably invite and call forth; when our green fields of waving harvests shall be trodden down by the murderous soldiery and fiery car of war sweeping over our land; our temples of justice laid in ashes; all the horrors and desolations of war upon us — who but this Convention will be held responsible for it? and who but him who shall have given his vote for this unwise and ill-timed measure (as I honestly think and believe) shall be held to strict account for this suicidal act by the present generation, and probably cursed and execrated by posterity for all coming time, for the wide and desolating ruin that will inevitably follow this act you now propose to perpetrate?

Pause, I entreat you, and consider for a moment what reasons you can give that will even satisfy yourselves in calmer moments — what reasons you can give to your fellow-sufferers in the calamity that it will bring upon us? What reason can you give to the nations of the earth to justify it? They will be the calm and deliberate judges in the case; and to what cause, or *one* overt act, can you name or point, on which to rest the plea of justification? What right has the North assailed? What interest of the South has been invaded? What justice has been denied, and what claim, founded in justice and right, has been withheld? Can either of you to-day name one governmental act of wrong, deliberately and purposely done by the government of Washington, of which the South has a right to complain? I challenge the answer! While, on the other hand, let me show the facts, (and believe me, gentlemen, I am not here the advocate of the North; but I am here the friend, the firm friend and lover of the South and her institutions, and for this reason I speak thus plainly and faithfully for *yours, mine,* and every other man's interest, the words of truth and soberness,) of which I wish you to judge, and I will only state facts which are clear and undeniable, and which now stand as records authentic in the history of our country.

When we of the South demanded the slave trade, or the importation of Africans for the cultivation of our lands, did they not yield the right for twenty years? When we asked a three-fifths representation in Congress for our slaves, was it not granted? When we asked and demanded the return of any fugitive from justice, or the recovery of those persons owing labor or allegiance, was it not incorporated in the Constitution, and again ratified and strengthened in the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850?

But do you reply, that in many instances they have violated this compact, and have not been faithful to their engagements! As individuals and local communities they may have done so, but not by the sanction



of government; for that has always been true to Southern interests. Again, gentlemen, look at another fact: When we have asked that more territory should be added, that we might spread the institution of Slavery, have they not yielded to our demands in giving us Louisiana, Florida, and Texas, out of which four States have been carved, and ample territory for four more to be added in due time, if you, by this unwise and impolitic act, do not destroy this hope, and, perhaps, by it lose all, and have your last slave wrenched from you by stern military rule, as South America and Mexico were; or, by the vindictive decree of a universal emancipation, which may reasonably be expected to follow!

But, again, gentlemen, what have we to gain by this proposed change of our relation to the general government! We have always had the control of it, and can yet, if we remain in it, and are as united as we have been. We have had a majority of the Presidents chosen from the South, as well as the control and management of most of those chosen from the North. We have had sixty years of Southern Presidents to their twenty-four, thus controlling the Executive department. So of the judges of the Supreme Court, we have had eighteen from the South, and but eleven from the North; although nearly four-fifths of the judicial business has arisen in the Free States, yet a majority of the Court has always been from the South. This we have required, so as to guard against any interpretation of the Constitution unfavorable to us. In like manner we have been equally watchful to guard our interests in the Legislative branch of government. In choosing the presiding Presidents (*pro tem.*) of the Senate, we have had twenty-four to their eleven. Speakers of the House, we have had twenty-three, and they twelve. While the majority of the Representatives, from their greater population, have always been from the North, yet we have so generally secured the Speaker, because he, to a great extent, shapes and controls the legislation of the country. Nor have we had less control in every other department of the general government. Attorney-generals we have had fourteen, while the North have had but five. Foreign ministers, we have had eighty-six, and they but fifty-four. While three fourths of the business which demands diplomatic agents abroad is clearly from the Free States, from their greater commercial interests, yet we have had the principal embassies, so as to secure the world markets for our cotton, tobacco, and sugar, on the best possible terms. We have had a vast majority of the higher offices of both army and navy, while a larger proportion of the soldiers and sailors were drawn from the North. Equally so of clerks, auditors, and comptrollers filling the Executive department; the records show for the last fifty years, that of the three thousand thus employed, we have had more than two thirds of the same, while we have but one third of the white population of the Republic.

Again, look at another item, and one, be assured, in which we have a great and vital interest; it is that of revenue, or means of supporting government. From official documents, we learn that a fraction over three fourths of the revenue collected for the support of government has uniformly been raised from the North.

Pause, now, while you can, gentlemen, and contemplate carefully and candidly these important items. Look at another necessary branch of government, and learn from stern statistical facts how matters stand in that department. I mean the mail and post-office privileges that we



now enjoy under the general government, as it has been for years past. The expense for the transportation of the mail in the Free States was, by the report of the Postmaster General for the year 1860, a little over \$13,000,000, while the income was \$19,000,000. But in the Slave States, the transportation of the mail was \$14,716,000, while the revenue from the same was \$8,001,026, leaving a deficit of \$6,115,735 to be supplied by the North for our accommodation, and without it we must have been entirely cut off from this most essential branch of government.

Leaving out of view, for the present, the countless millions of dollars you must expend in a war with the North, with tens of thousands of your sons and brothers slain in battle, and offered up as sacrifices upon the altar of your ambition, — and for what, we ask again? Is it for the overthrow of the American government, established by our common ancestry, cemented and built up by their sweat and blood, and founded on the broad principles of *Right, Justice, and Humanity?* And, as such, I must declare here, as I have often done before, and which has been repeated by the greatest and wisest of statesmen and patriots in this and other lands, that *it is the best and freest government, the most equal in its rights, the most just in its decisions, the most lenient in its measures, and the most inspiring in its principles to elevate the race of men, that the sun of heaven ever shone upon.*

Now, for you to attempt to overthrow such a government as this, under which we have lived for more than three quarters of a century — in which we have gained our wealth, our standing as a nation, our domestic safety while the elements of peril are around us, with peace and tranquillity accompanied with unbounded prosperity and rights unassailed — is the height of madness, folly, and wickedness, to which I can neither lend my sanction nor my vote.

BARNWELL RHETT, in the Secession Convention of South Carolina, said: "The secession of South Carolina is not an event of a day. It is not produced by Mr. Lincoln's election, nor by the non-execution of the Fugitive Slave Law. It is a matter which has been gathering head for THIRTY YEARS."

Mr. KEITT, in the same Convention, said: "I have been engaged in this great secession movement EVER SINCE I ENTERED POLITICAL LIFE."

Mr. INGLIS, another member of the Convention, said: "Most of us have had this matter of secession under consideration for at least TWENTY YEARS."

Mr. PARKER, also in the same Convention, said: "This secession movement is no spasmodic effort that has come suddenly upon us, but it has been gathering head for a LONG SERIES OF YEARS."

Rev. Mr. PRENTISS, in a sermon preached at St. Peter's Church, Charleston, S. C., Dec., 1860, said: "The United States government is about to be destroyed, and another is to be built upon its ruins. That Slavery is a Christian institution, and the slave trade a Christian duty, is the one idea that underlies our secession and revolutionary movement, and the sooner the whole people, North and South, understand this fact, the better for us all. No compromise, no adjustment will satisfy the South which does not secure absolute protection and permanence to Slavery and the slave trade, and permit its unlimited expansion."

PRESTON BROOKS, before his constituents, in justification of his attempt to assassinate Charles Sumner, said: "The issue is upon us, How can we sustain, perpetuate, and extend slavery? The only way to meet this issue is, just to tear the Constitution to shreds, trample it under our feet, and form a Southern Confederacy, every State of which shall be a Slave-holding State. Our only hope in the support of Slavery is in the destruction of the Federal Government. I would not have an officer in our new Confederacy who would not swear that slavery is right. Let the slaveholders of the South rise above the constitution and laws, take the power into their own hands, and lay their strong arm upon the treasury and archives of the Federal Government."

ALEXANDER H. STEPHENS, in March, 1854, said of the North in the House of Representatives, in a debate in regard to Kansas: "Well, gentlemen, you make a good deal of clamor over this Kansas affair, but it don't alarm us. You have often *threatened* but you have never *performed*. You always *caved in*, and you will do so again. We *have got you in our power*. You *must submit to the yoke*. Don't be so impatient as to complain: you will only be *slapped in the face*. Don't resist: you will only be *lashed into obedience*."

Hon. L. W. SPRATT, speaking of the American Republic and the Southern Confederacy, in the *Charleston Mercury*, and showing the difference between them, says: "The one embodies in its political structure the principle that equality is the right of *man*, the other that it is the right of *equals* only. The one embodying the principle that equality is the right of man, expands on the horizontal plane of pure *democracy*; the other, embodying the principle that it is not the right of *man* but of *equals* only, has taken to itself the rounded form of a *social aristocracy*. In the one there is *hired labor*, in the other *slave labor*; in the one labor is *voluntary*, in the other labor is *involuntary*. In the labor of the one there is the *elective franchise*, in the other *there is not*. In the one, the power of government is with the *lower* (laboring) class; in the other, with the *upper* (non-laboring) class. In the one the reins of government come from the *heels*, in the other, from the *head* of society. In the one, the laborer has the power to rise and to dispose of the fruits of his labor, and thus the ship of state is turned bottom upwards, In the other, the laborer has no power of rising, and the ship of state is balanced by a *disfranchised* class. The contest between these two states is inevitable. The principle that "all men are equal" (in natural rights) is destructive of Slavery at the South."

A DEMOCRATIC PAPER, in South Carolina, in 1856, said: "The theory of *free government* is a delusion. *Slavery is the natural and normal condition of the laboring man* — WHITE OR BLACK."

The RICHMOND ENQUIRER, (the organ of Jeff. Davis & Co.,) says: "The laws of all the Southern States justify the holding of WHITE MEN in Slavery. The principle of Slavery is right in ITSELF, and does not depend on DIFFERENCE OF COMPLEXION."

Who, then, is responsible for this War? Where is the hope of peace except in crushing Slavery and the Rebellion? The simple issue is, — SHALL THE NORTH BE SUBJUGATED TO SLAVERY AND SLAVE LABOR, OR THE SOUTH TO FREEDOM AND FREE LABOR?

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